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Baker-Polito Administration, Mass Audubon Announce the Re-Opening of Stony Brook Wildlife Sanctuary Boardwalk

Upcoming Event to Highlight Partnership to Restore Access to Important Wetlands

NORFOLK — The Baker-Polito Administration and Mass Audubon today announced the re-opening of the new boardwalk located at Stony Brook Wildlife Sanctuary in the Town of Norfolk, and will host a special celebration and ribbon cutting ceremony on Saturday, August 26, 2017, at 11:00AM. The event, which will take place on the new boardwalk and will feature remarks by state and local officials and representatives from Mass Audubon, is expected to attract sanctuary visitors, birders, and other nature lovers.

"For over 100 years, Massachusetts has led the nation in conserving and protecting important natural resources, while also increasing access for people of all abilities to benefit from," **said Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary Matthew Beaton**. "By investing over \$500,000 to construct the new Stony Brook Wildlife Sanctuary boardwalk, this important facility will enable the public to visit, explore, and learn from our natural surroundings."

Mass Audubon manages the adjoining Bristol-Blake Reservation through an agreement with the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). DCR managed the reconstruction of the boardwalk, which was designed to reduce stress on the surrounding wetlands by utilizing pilings with smaller but stronger anchors. Moreover, the new boardwalk also sits higher above the water line, thus further protecting the aquatic habitat, while also offering an elevated vantage point for visitors.

"The Department of Conservation and Recreation clearly made this capital project a priority, and all who will once again explore the beautiful wetland it passes through are the beneficiaries," **said Mass Audubon President Gary Clayton**. "Mass Audubon values its long relationship with the DCR and other state environmental agencies, and the boardwalk project is another great example of this partnership at its very best."

For more than 40 years, the boardwalk has enabled visitors to enjoy the property's expansive wetland habitat and observe birds and other wildlife it supports. Although the boardwalk had undergone a major overhaul in 2010, years of gradual deterioration, compounded by long-term impacts from the aquatic environment and seasonal weather, such as snow and ice, forced its closure in March of 2016. The Baker-Polito Administration invested \$579,168 to completely rebuild the boardwalk.

"DCR values its strong partnership with Mass Audubon here, and at other State Reservations, and this project ensures that visitors to the Stony Brook Wildlife Sanctuary receive an excellent outdoor recreation experience," **said DCR Commissioner Leo Roy**. "The Baker-Polito Administration seeks to encourage children and their families to get outside and visit the Massachusetts state parks system, which offers a wealth of natural, cultural, and recreational resources, like the newly constructed boardwalk, for all to enjoy."

The 525-foot long boardwalk provides accessible and expansive views over Kingfisher Pond and Teal Marsh following the same popular footprint visitors have come to appreciate through the years. In addition, completion of the boardwalk once again allows access to a section of the post-and-rope Sensory Trail that was inaccessible when the boardwalk was closed. Other Stony Brook Wildlife Sanctuary highlights, include:

- A nature play area that features unique structures for climbing, hiding, and free play;
- A native butterfly garden that surrounds the Nature Center;
- Natural history exhibits;
- Programming space; and,
- A gift shop with nature-oriented items.

"Stony Brook has been a valued staple in Norfolk for many years," **said State Representative Shawn Dooley (R-Norfolk)**. "I was proud to work alongside DCR, Mass Audubon, and the Baker-Polito Administration at large to ensure that we are able to continue to provide residents of our community a fun, safe, and tranquil environment to enjoy the natural beauty that our area has to offer. I thank everyone who played a role in making this project happen."

"The Stony Brook Wildlife Sanctuary is a true treasure in the Norfolk community," **said State Senator Richard Ross (R-Wrentham)**. "It is vital for the state to continue conserving and protecting natural resources while enabling the public to enjoy all that sanctuary land has to offer. I appreciate the Baker-Polito administration, DCR and Mass Audubon for their efforts to see the rebuilding of the sanctuary's boardwalk become reality."

Please visit Mass Audubon's Stony Brook Wildlife Sanctuary [webpage](#), where visitors can find hours of operations, admission fees, and other information regarding the sanctuary.

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The Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), an agency of the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, oversees 450,000 acres of parks and forests, beaches, bike trails, watersheds, dams, and parkways. Led by Commissioner Leo Roy, the agency's mission is to protect, promote, and enhance our common wealth of natural, cultural, and recreational resources. To learn more about DCR, our facilities, and our programs, please visit www.mass.gov/dcr. Contact us at mass.parks@state.ma.us.

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